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The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

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The Right Hon. John Major MP,
Prime Minister,
10, Downing Street,
London SW1

Dear Mr Major,

We appeal to you as Prime Minister to intercede with the Indonesian Government on behalf of fifty-two East Timorese who are to be brought to trial on charges which relate to their support for East Timor's right to self-determination. We urge you to call for their immediate release.

Twenty-six of them are in detention in Dili, the capital of East Timor. The Dili prosecutor's office says they were "involved" in the demonstration which took place in Dili on 12 November. This was a peaceful demonstration to commemorate an East Timorese killed by Indonesian forces two weeks earlier, and to express opposition to Indonesia's illegal occupation of East Timor. That demonstration ended in a bloodbath at the Santa Cruz cemetery, when Indonesian forces opened fire, killing up to 200 people and wounding many more.

Eight will be tried for "subversion", a charge which carries a possible death sentence. The other eighteen will be tried for "criminal" offenses. Yet, while these people will go on trial, nothing has been done to bring to justice those in the army who were responsible for the massacre.

Another four to go on trial are East Timorese students under detention in Bali; all are students at Udayana University, Denpasar. They too may be tried for "subversion". According to press reports, preliminary investigations sought to prove that they maintained contact with Dili, Lisbon and London to inform the outside world of human rights abuses in East Timor. The authorities also claim to have found grenades and anti-Indonesian posters in their homes. But the searches took place without warrants; nor were the accused or any lawyers present to confirm any findings.

The remaining twenty-two are East Timorese students from a number of Indonesian universities who took part in a peaceful demonstration in Jakarta on 19 November when they protested

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against the Santa Cruz massacre and called on the United Nations to arrange for an act of self-determination in East Timor. Besides demonstrating outside the UN office, they planned to visit several foreign embassies, including the British embassy, but were prevented from doing so by the police. Another forty-nine arrested during the demonstration have been allowed home and are under house-arrest.

The very fact that the authorities will lay charges against the 52 detainees underscores the irrelevance of Indonesia's Commission of Inquiry which has not yet submitted its report and recommendations. The authorities appear to have made up their minds already about where the "guilt" lies.

TAPOL firmly believes that there are no grounds for any of these East Timorese to be tried. They were all engaged in lawful pursuits and should be released without delay. It would be wrong to argue that these trials should proceed on the grounds of due process of the law. They are political trials and cannot be justified on any grounds. There is no reason to believe that the trials will be fair. Already, there have been violations of Indonesia's procedural code; for instance, far from allowing them unhindered access to legal assistance, all fifty-two detainees have been held in incommunicado detention.

The British Government has made it clear that it does not recognise Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. These East Timorese will go on trial because they refuse to accept annexation. It is therefore appropriate for your Government to intercede on their behalf and call for their immediate release.

In light of the fact that the Council of Ministers of the European Community has issued a number of statements on East Timor, a copy of this letter in being sent to the Dutch Presidency, in the hope that the EC will also respond to this appeal.

The names of the detainees in Jakarta and Bali are appended to this letter; nothing is yet known about the identities of the detainees in Dili.

Yours sincerely,

Carmel Budiardjo

Appendix 1

East Timorese students detained in Jakarta

1. Metodio Moniz
2. Antonio Lopes
3. Filipe da Silva
4. Joao Sarmento
5. Fausto Bernardino
6. Joao Travolta
7. Agapito Cardoso
8. Gregorio de Araujo
9. Jose Maria Belo
10. Avelino Maria Coelho da Silva
11. Mario Canelas
12. Egas Quintao Monteiro
13. Francisco Vasco Ramos
14. Jose Luis de Oliveira
15. Sergio Dias Quintao
16. Joao Freitas da Camara
17. Benevides Cabral
18. Domingos Barreto
19. Ilidio da Costa
20. Virgilio
21. Antonio Soares
22. Antoninho Goncalves

all held in
POLDA METRO JAYA
Jl. Jendral Sudirman 45
Jakarta, Indonesia

East Timorese students held in Den Pasar, Bali

1. Jose Pompeia Saldanha Ribeiro
2. Fernando Araujo
3. Clemente Soares
4. Antonio Matos

all held in
POLDA NUSRA
Den Pasar, Bali